

Wildcats medal three at Frontier League tourney



Louisburg junior Cade Holtzen works for a pin Saturday during the Frontier League Tournament on Saturday at Ottawa High School. Holtzen finished second at 126 pounds.

OTTAWA – Three Louisburg wrestlers found their way to the podium during the Frontier League Tournament on Saturday at Ottawa High School.

Cade Holtzen, Ryan Owens and Brandon Doles each placed in the top three of their respective weight classes to help lead the Wildcats in the nine-team tournament. Holtzen made his way to the championship before finishing second, while Owens and Doles each took third place.

In all, six wrestlers placed in the top five and the Wildcats finished ninth overall with 107 points. Bonner Springs won the league title with 234 points and Paola was second with 180.5.

“Competition at league was pretty tough this year, and our league has only gotten stronger with the addition of Piper, Tonganoxie, and Bonner, but I was

initially disappointed with how we finished up as a team," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "Then I remember that there's a reason why we have a full season leading up to regionals and state. We face tests every week at every tournament, and the focus is on growth and progress. No match should define a season, and we're not going to let our league performance define the team's season.

"Last week was Homecoming, which was full of all sorts of activities and distractions, and we also had a snow day when we couldn't even practice. A lot of things provided obstacles, but in the end, we walked out of league with a specific insight into where we need to work on improving for regionals and state."

Holtzen (29-3) earned a spot in the championship match of the 126-pound class. The Louisburg junior opened with pin over Paola's Sheldon Martin and then pinned Piper's Nick Lawson in the semifinals.

All that set up a rematch of last season's 113-pound league final between Holtzen and Bonner Springs' Cassius Vanderpool. Unfortunately for Holtzen, who is currently ranked No. 6 in Class 4A, the result wasn't the same as he lost a close 3-2 decision to finish runner-up.

“Cade wrestled a really tough match, and I loved seeing his confidence early in the match,” Bovaird said. “As it progressed, though, I wonder if he got to thinking too much and let his focus shift from his wrestling to the end of the match. It was a momentary lapse where his opponent was able to get an escape and score the winning point.



Sophomore Brandon Doles tries to put his opponent on his back Saturday during a 160-pound match.

“Overall, he had a pretty dominant day. He had a rematch against the Piper kid. The last time they wrestled, Cade wasn’t able to get the pin and he

only scored a tech fall; on Saturday, he not only repeated his dominance on top, but he also got a pretty solid pin out of it."

Owens

(30-5) had a strong start to his league tournament at 120 pounds as he opened with an 18-8 major decision over Paola's Steven Yeager and then battled Bonner Springs' Peyton Richardson in the semifinals. It was a back and forth match, but Owens was eventually pinned late in the third period.

The

Louisburg junior responded with a pin of Ottawa's Trevor Kaub on the backside of the bracket and then pinned Yeager in the third-place match.

Doles

(26-8) also won his first match of the day as he pinned Paola's Corey Holub, but then came up against Spring Hill's Jakob Stovall in the semifinals. It was a low-scoring, tight match, but Stovall scored late to take the 3-2 decision.

Doles

responded on the backside to pin Baldwin's William Damet and then pinned Bonner Springs' Jackson McArthur in the third place match.



Junior Ryan Owens finished the league tournament with a 3-1 record and a third place finish.

“They both wrestled solid matches throughout the day,” Bovaird said of

Owens and Doles. “I think their semifinals losses, along with several other key

losses for the team that day, really showed us how much we need to focus on

conditioning this week. Brandon was aggressive throughout the semis match with

Spring Hill, but unable to capitalize on his scoring attempts.

“Ryan showed a lot of dominance in his semis match against Bonner Springs, but ultimately ran out of gas in the third. They were tied up before he got turned. Overall, I’m pretty

happy with their ability to bounce back and score some big points in the consolation rounds.”

Sophomore Johnathan

Keegan-Childs just missed out on the medal stand as he finished fourth at 195 pounds after recording two pins.

Freshman Kaven Bartlett

also earned two pins at 113 pounds and finished fifth overall.

Sophomore Aiden

Barker also took fifth at 170 pounds after he finished with two pins and a 2-2 record on the day.

Louisburg will continue

its postseason action this Friday and Saturday as it hosts the Class 4A

regional tournament. The top four finishers in each weight class will earn a spot at the state tournament next week in Salina.

“I think the whole team is pretty stoked to be hosting regionals,” Bovaird said. “It’s a big deal to have our regional tournament on our home mats, and our gym seems to have been made to host an event like this. We should have a nice crowd cheering on the team, but I think with the smooth practices we’ve been having and the team’s ability to reset and refocus, we should have a pretty solid tournament this year.”

Wildcats end regular season with home dual win



Junior Ryan Owens works for some back points against an opponent during a 120-pound match Tuesday during the Wildcat Duals at Louisburg High School.

Thanks to Mother Nature, the Louisburg High School wrestling schedule was a little bit shorter than in year's past.

A couple different events, including the Wildcats' home tournament last month, had to be cancelled due to weather and head coach Bobby Bovaird was looking to add something to his schedule to give his wrestlers more mat time.

Bovaird was able to find something right before the start of the postseason as Louisburg invited Blue Valley West, Anderson County and Girard to compete in the Wildcat Duals on Tuesday at Louisburg High School.

Although the Wildcats didn't get the results they wanted, as they went 1-2 on the evening, it was a good way to get ready for the important tournaments ahead.

“We lost 4-5 matches with our home invitational being canceled, then the next week we lost one more match with the Spring Hill dual being canceled,” Bovaird said.

“It’s tough trying to make-up matches with wrestling. A game can be easily rescheduled, but not an entire tournament. I’m very thankful that my administration was willing to let us host this meet to make up some competition points, plus it gave us one more chance to showcase our wrestlers at home.”

It didn’t get off to the start the Wildcats were hoping for as they fell to Blue Valley West (54-24) and Anderson County (42-32). Louisburg did end the night on a positive note as it defeated Girard, 45-21, in its final dual of the season as the Wildcats now focus on the Frontier League Tournament this Saturday.

Louisburg got victories from Kaven Bartlett (113 pounds), Ryan Owens (120), Cade Holtzen (126), Brett Rangel (145), Brandon Doles (160), Aiden Barker (170), Jonathan Keegan-Childs (195) and Elijah Eslinger (285) to secure the win over Girard.

“We didn’t wrestle our best Tuesday night, but that’s all right,” Bovaird said. “It gave us some ideas of where we really need to focus as we get ready for the end of the season. I especially am proud of the guys for

finishing our dual season with a victory. We have a lot of opens and a lot of younger and lighter kids bumping up to fill our varsity weights. That's something that really impresses me, that we have the ability to fill those weights with kids who can compete."

Owens, Holtzen and Doles each finished the night with a 3-0 record, while Bartlett, Holtzen and Doles are each currently ranked No. 6 in Class 4A in their respective weight classes.

Senior Sam Kratochvil (220) got a win against Blue Valley West, while Barker, Keegan-Childs and Eslinger also picked up victories over Anderson County.

The Wildcats will now turn their attention to the Frontier League Invitational. The Frontier League currently has two teams (Tonganoxie and Piper) ranked in the top 10 in Class 4A, along with state-ranked wrestlers from several schools.

The tournament will begin at 9 a.m. tomorrow at Ottawa High School.

"The Frontier League is traditionally a pretty tough tournament," Bovaird said. "Each of our guys will have some key match-ups that will help us get set for regionals. Whether it's a state-ranked opponent from another league school, a potential regional match-up, or even just a chance for a revenge win, we're

sitting in a good position to win those match-ups."

Wildcats place three in finals of Baldwin Invitational



Louisburg sophomore Brandon Doles gets a pin during his 160-pound match last Thursday during the Wildcats' dual against Ottawa.

In what was one of its tougher tournaments to date, the Louisburg wrestling team more than held its own Saturday during the Baldwin Invitational.

The Wildcats put three wrestlers in the finals and had three more place in the top six as they went on to finish ninth in the team standings.

Kaven Bartlett (113 pounds), Cade Holtzen (126) and Brandon Doles (160) each made their way to the finals and finished second. Ryan Owens (120) and Aiden Barker (170) was fifth and A.J. Reed (182) took sixth.

“Coach

Harris at Baldwin has always tried to make this tournament a tough competition, inviting as many 4A schools as possible,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “Many times, it’s like a mini-state tournament. You’ll see some marquee match-ups throughout the tournament. I love that we had guys able to step up and battle their way into the finals. It’s a great feeling having our guys able to earn medals at this tournament.”

Holtzen

recorded a couple pins on his way to the championship match as he opened with a first period pin of Clay Center’s Aden Hatcher and then followed that up with a pin in the third period of Burlington’s Johnathon Williams in quarterfinals. In the semifinals, he recorded a 14-3 major decision of Wamego’s Nick Cruickshank.

In the finals, Holtzen squared off with Marysville’s Isaac Novotny, who is ranked No. 5 in Class 4A. Holtzen and Novotny went into overtime, but Holtzen fell in a 10-9 decision.

“It

was definitely an exciting match, and it came down to the fact that Cade made some mistakes that his opponent capitalized on to score his points,” Bovaird said. “The great thing about that is that we have some specific things to work on. We have time to make corrections, to analyze film, and to work on improving technique.

"The next time Cade faces off against this opponent, he'll have put in the time to improve those areas. Cade really did wrestle a tough match against him, and he's got nothing to hang his head about."



Doles, who is currently ranked No. 6 at 160 pounds, also got off to a good start as he pinned his way to the championship match. He opened with a pin of Labette County's Cody Hambleton and then followed it up with another pin of Baldwin's William Damet, before getting a revenge win over Eudora's Nate Criqui with a second period victory in the semifinals.

Burlington's Cael Johnson was Doles' next opponent in the championship. Johnson, who is the No. 1 ranked wrestler in 4A, pinned Doles in the second round.

"Brandon received our weekly 'Wildcat Award' for his performance this weekend," Bovaird said. "He stepped up and got a revenge win against his Eudora opponent and he battled pretty well against his Burlington opponent, who is ranked #1 in the state. Five of his six losses this season come from the No. 1 (twice) and No. 5 (three times) ranked wrestlers in 4A."

Bartlett, who also cracked the state rankings at No. 5 at 113 pounds, recorded three straight pins on his way to the title match. He defeated Osawatomie's Damon Estes and Marysville's Tristen Schaefer with first period pins and then pinned Perry-Lecompton's Mason Bahnmaier in the second period of the semifinals.

In the first-place match, Bartlett lost a 4-0 decision to Holton's Jake Barnes, who is currently ranked third in Class 3A.

"Kaven is really showing that his hard work in the off-season is paying off," Bovaird said. "He's got some great youth wrestling experience, and now he's stepping up his game. I told him after his finals match that the conversation is no longer 'he's

got a good chance of qualifying for state.' It's now a conversation of 'he's got a good chance at placing at state.'"

Owens

advanced to the semifinals of 120 pounds and squared off with Osawatomie Chance

Mitzner, who is No. 5 in the state. Owens battled him to the end, but lost a

3-2 decision, and eventually took fifth after he won a 6-5 decision over Eudora's

Dayton Fraser.

Barker went 3-2 on the day to finish fifth at 170 pounds, while Reed also picked up two wins to take sixth at 182 pounds.

"Ryan

Owens battled and lost a tough 3-2 match to the No. 4 ranked kid in 4A,"

Bovaird said. "In the consolation bracket, he had a tough time bouncing back,

but he competed pretty well. Aiden Barker came out and wrestled well, too. AJ

Reed also had a good tournament. What he's missing in technique and experience,

he makes up for with toughness and competitiveness. Jacob Briley and Sam

Kratochvil also won some matches for us and had a good tournament."

Louisburg

is back in action Thursday when it travels to state-ranked Piper for a Frontier League dual.

Wildcats fall in Senior Night dual to Ottawa

On a night that honored seniors

Hugh Staver, Sam Kraotchvil and manager Elizabeth Kratochvil during Senior

Night ceremonies last Thursday, the Wildcats had a tough time against Ottawa in a Frontier League dual.

The Wildcats fell 60-24 to the

Cyclones as Louisburg had to deal with several open weights.

Ryan Owens and Cade Holtzen opened

with a pair of pins to give Louisburg a 12-0 lead early, but the Cyclones were

just too much. Brandon Doles and Aiden Barker also recorded pins on the night for Louisburg.

Holtzen notches 100th career win as Wildcats take third at Parsons



PARSONS – The Louisburg wrestling

team gained a little more traction on its season Friday when the Wildcats

traveled to the Parsons Invitational.

The Wildcats racked up 78 points to finish in third place out 12 teams and had five wrestlers finish in the top four. Among those five was junior Cade Holtzen, who had a special night of his own.

Holtzen won the 126-pound division and made a little history in the process. After winning his championship match, he recorded his 100th career victory as he finished the day 3-0.

He opened the tournament with a 7-0 decision on Lebanon's (Mo.) Austin Johnson and then earned a 9-1 major decision over Lebanon's Bo Rosen in the semifinals. Holtzen (21-1) later pinned Labette County's Evan Flatt in 54 seconds in the championship.

"Cade's bracket was pretty unusual," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "His first match was against a JV kid from Lebanon, but that kid could have started on many other teams. His second match in the semifinals was against the varsity Lebanon kid, who was pretty tough. In the finals, he saw a returning state qualifier from Labette County.

"It's challenges like these that shape the rest of the season, and I'm proud of how Cade stepped up and competed. Seeing him join the 'Century Club' by getting that 100th win was a great way to cap off the tournament."

Three

other Wildcats also placed in the top four as junior Ryan Owens (120 pounds)

finished second. Freshman Kaven Bartlett (113) and sophomore Brandon Doles

(160) took third, while sophomore Aiden Barker (170) finished in fourth.

Overall, Bovaird liked what he saw from his team.

“Coming

away with another team plaque was a nice touch as the team has been working so

hard throughout the month of January,” Bovaird said. “In the bigger picture of

the season, January is always a tough month. It’s a long sprint, week-to-week.

We have tournaments each weekend and a dual each week. There’s the regular

problems due to inclement weather, and it’s also the time of year that everyone

seems to get sick. These guys have been working their tails off, and something

like a team plaque is a nice reward to let them know that their hard work is paying off.”

Owens (21-2) had a good start to his tournament as he pinned Lebanon’s Andrew Dent in the second period and then won a tough 9-7 decision over Independence’s Cooper Anderson to advance to the championship. It was there where he was pinned by Lebanon’s Cole Patten and ended in second place.

As for Doles (18-5), who is currently ranked No. 6 in the state at 160 pounds, he opened with a pin of Cherryvale’s Brad Morris, but ran into Independence’s Ian Lawson in the semifinals and was pinned in the second period. Lawson is currently No. 5 in Class 4A.

Doles

bounced back to pin Lebanon's Connor Brand in the consolation semifinals and then won a 5-1 decision over Santa Fe Trail's Stephan Roberts in the third-place match.

Bartlett (19-4) won his first match in the 113-pound bracket after he pinned Cherryvale's Dalton Morrill, but was pinned by Lebanon's Davis Joiner in the semifinals. Bartlett responded to pin Erie's Nate Thompson in the consolation round and then won a tough 2-0 decision over Lebanon's Taydem Johnson.

At 170 pounds, Barker (12-7) is filling in for junior Ben Wiedenmann who is injured. After losing his first match, he responded with back-to-back pins to advance to the third-place round, where he was pinned by Lebanon's Gabriel Schiller.

As

much success as the Wildcats had, it was a difficult start to the day as school was canceled on that morning, but the meet went on as scheduled. It left the wrestlers with a different start to their day.

"When the kids woke up Friday morning to learn that school was canceled, that really made things challenging," Bovaird said. "It was up in the air as to whether or not we'd be able to compete in the tournament, and thanks to the due diligence and planning of our administrators, we were given the go ahead to travel. I'm very proud of how the team was able to hold their weight, refocus in the face of uncertainty, and get the job done. We had a lot of opens at Parsons, but they still arose to the challenge."

Louisburg is back in action at 5:30 p.m. Thursday when it hosts Ottawa in a league dual on Senior Night. The Wildcats will then travel to the Baldwin Invitational on Saturday.

Wildcats get home dual win over Lawrence



Louisburg junior Ryan Owens brings Lawrence's Kevin Honas to the mat Tuesday at Louisburg High School. Owens upset the No. 4 ranked Honas and won by decision in the Wildcats' 48-30 victory.

When it comes to duals, the Louisburg wrestling team has been a little unlucky so far this season – whether it was because of open weights, injuries or bad matchups.

It all seemed to come together for the Wildcats on Tuesday when they hosted Lawrence High School. Louisburg put together a strong showing as it downed the Lions 48-30 and captured their first dual win since early December.

“It felt great getting a dual win, especially at home on our own mat in front of our crowd,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “Lawrence is a young team, but then again, so are we. We ended up with two open weight classes, and that’s been our struggle the last couple of years.

“I had several guys move up a weight to fill out our lineup, and I love the fact that I can do that with our squad. If I didn’t think it was a safe choice or that our guy could handle moving up a weight, I wouldn’t do it. It’s always a gamble, and I’m proud of how the squad stepped up and answered the challenge.”

The dual started at 126 pounds when Cade Holtzen opened with a pin, but Lawrence recorded back-to-back pins against Luke Kelly and Jarrett Hoyle at 132 and 138 pounds, respectively to take the lead. Senior Harrison Laney responded with a big pin at 145 pounds to tie the match.

Lawrence took the lead once again after Louisburg was open at 152, but sophomores Brandon Doles and Aiden Barker came through in their matches. Doles and Barker both notched quick pins at 160 and 170 pounds to give the Wildcats a 24-18 advantage.

Louisburg

would build on its lead from there as sophomore A.J. Reed won by pin at 182 pounds. Lawrence was open in the next two weight classes and the Wildcats were up 42-18 to all but seal the win.

After

Lawrence won by pin in the heavyweight class against Elijah Eslinger, and the Wildcats were open at 106, the Lions cut the Wildcat lead to 12. Freshman Kaven Bartlett sealed the victory with a win by decision.

Even

though the dual was basically over, the final match ended up being the most competitive of the night. Junior Ryan Owens squared off with Lawrence's Kevin Honas, who is currently ranked No. 4 in Class 6A.

Owens

pulled off the upset as he was able to win by decision and improved his record to 19-1 on the season to end the evening on a strong note.

“Ryan’s

win at 120 was a great conclusion for the dual,” Bovaird said. “Not only did he win the match, but I saw a change in attitude and mindset with his competitiveness. In fact, that’s been the staple of his matches all season.

He’s really grown and advanced.

“I

don’t mind him not being ranked in 4A. He’s going to surprise some people this season, that’s for sure. Our seasoned wrestlers stepped up and

wrestled tough,
like I knew they would, and our newer wrestlers still gave it
a great battle,
whether they won or lost."

Louisburg
is back in action Friday when the Wildcats travel to the
Parsons Invitational.

Four Wildcats take first in Topeka tournament



TOPEKA – It had been a frustrating
start to the new year for the Louisburg wrestling team.

The Wildcats saw their first two events of 2020 cancelled, including their home tournament. It left them itching to get back on the mat and it showed Saturday.

Louisburg traveled to the Topeka
Invitational for its first competition in nearly a month and
the Wildcats were
able to shake off the rust and come home with some hardware.
They left Topeka
with four champions and one runner-up as the Wildcats finished
fourth out of 10
teams.

Freshman Kaven Bartlett (113 pounds), junior Cade Holtzen (126), sophomore Brandon Doles (160) and sophomore Aiden Barker (170) each finished first in their respective brackets to lead the Wildcats. Junior Ryan Owens (120) also advanced to the championship match, but finished second.

"They were definitely eager to get back on the mat," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "We've been working hard in the practice room, and after two weeks of some really awesome practices, it's great to see them get a chance to get on the mats to show what progress they've been making."

"The cancellations were frustrating, no doubt about it, but it is what it is. Every year we don't have any meets canceled due to weather, we're pretty lucky. I just hate losing our home tournament because it's a long-standing tradition and a great chance to get some quality matches on our home mats. "

Bartlett (16-3) got his day started with a technical fall of Topeka West's Jay Dillon and then outlasted Burlingame's Conner Collins for a 2-0 decision in the semifinals. Bartlett then captured the title with a 4-1 decision over Council Grove's Jesse Rodgers in the championship match.

At 126 pounds, Holtzen (18-1) pinned his way to a title. He made his way to the championship with easy pins over Bishop Miege's Daniel Henre and Gardner-Edgerton's Therron Meade. Then in the first-place match, Holtzen handed Council Grove's Wyatt Johnson his first loss of the year with another pin.

Doles (15-4) opened his day up with a pair of easy pins over Topeka-Hayden's TC Thompson and Gardner's Trenton Bryan to advance to the championship. He then battled Topeka High's Caemen Blake and won with a 7-5 decision.

Barker (10-5) filled in at 170 pounds for the Wildcats and recorded a pair of pins over Gardner's Aydin Lowery to record his first championship of the season.

Owens (18-1) started the tournament strong as he pinned Gardner's Zack Thomas and Highland Park's Javier Osorio to reach the finals. It was there where he suffered his first loss of the season in a 5-0 decision to Council Grove's Tom VanValkenburg, who is currently ranked No. 4 in Class 321A.

"Our guys really did come out well on Saturday," Bovaird said. "For Kaven and Aiden, it was their first ever varsity championship. Cade and Brandn have been there before, but they still had to earn it. Kaven held on to win two decisive matches with smart wrestling, especially on top. Cade had a tough opponent in the finals, but one great thing I saw from him was the ability to turn on the heat late in the match. He never let up, and finally got the pin in the third period.

"Brandon faced off against a very unorthodox opponent, a 6A state qualifier, and I think the match wasn't near as close as the score suggested. He was in control and dominant the whole match. Aiden stepped up to the opportunity to make some noise for himself, and he could have easily let himself get defeated mentally, but he showed some great mental toughness in his matches.

"Ryan Owens ran into the #4 ranked wrestler in 321A, and although he lost 5-0, he was competitive the entire time. That match, while it was a loss, helped him pinpoint some important things to work on, and with his attitude this season, he'll be

bouncing back with no problem. “

Sophomores A.J. Reed (182) and Johnathan Keegan-Childs (195) each finished fifth for Louisburg, while junior Jarrett Hoyle (132) and senior Sam Kratochivil (220) each placed sixth.

As a team, the Wildcats finished with 143.5 points to take fourth despite being open in four weight classes. Council Grove won the team title with 171 points, Topeka High was second with 169.5 and Gardner-Edgerton was third with 150.

Louisburg is back in action at 5:30 p.m. tonight when it hosts Lawrence for Alumni Night. The Wildcats will also travel to the Parsons Invitational on Friday.

Top 10 Louisburg Sports Stories of 2019



It was a successful, and eventful, 2019 for Louisburg High School athletics and for those who are connected to the Wildcat program. This past year created a lot of school history for LHS and several programs brought back state hardware.

Below are the Top 10 stories from 2019, along with a brief explanation of each. Included in the explanation is the link to the actual story from the event.

When putting the list together, I took a lot of things into account – whether it was team vs. individual, popularity of the sport, historical achievements and the interest it drew on the web site. There were stories that I had to leave off that normally would easily make it. 2019 was that successful of a year for Wildcat athletics.

This year was a blast to cover and I was blessed to have the opportunity to go along for the ride with many of these. As much fun as it was, I can't wait for 2020 to begin. Looking forward to it!



10. Tucker, Ratliff-Becher win powerlifting titles, Tucker breaks state record.

Two Louisburg High School weightlifters made their way to the top of the podium in March during the Class 4A State Powerlifting Meet at Basehor-Linwood High School.

Louisburg senior Kiefer Tucker and junior Reilly Ratliff-Becher both earned state championships in their respective weight class. Senior Jonathan DePriest finished third overall and several other Wildcats also earned individual medals.

Not only did Tucker win a state title in the 220-pound division, he also broke a 24-year state bench press record as he recorded a bench of 375 pounds to surpass the old mark of 365. He also won the squat competition at 505 pounds and had a total of 1,165 pounds to run away with the crown.

Tucker's total was the highest three-lift mark at the entire state meet in all weight classes.

"I had messed around with 375 and 385 before on bench, so I was confident that I could lift it if I had the chance," Tucker said. "I was more worried about my first lifts on bench at 345 and 365 because if I messed up on those attempts then I would not have had the change to even attempt 375. It was definitely a sigh of relief when I finally locked it out.

"It was a great feeling to beat the state record. To put Louisburg up on the record chart definitely brought a smile to my face."

Ratliff-Becher had a big day in the women's division as she won a state crown in the 180-pound weight class. She finished with a three-lift total of 575 pounds.



The Louisburg junior took first in bench press with 155 pounds, first in clean at 150 pounds and second in squat with a 270-pound lift.

“Winning the state title meant a lot to me,” Ratliff-Becher said. “I have put in a lot of time and

effort in weights class, so it's nice to see it has paid off. But, also because I feel as if I put out a message to girls that it's cool to be strong physically. I know that being sometimes the only girls in a class with a lot of strong guys is intimidating. Weightlifting is all about your own personal growth and seeing how far you can push yourself.

"I was honestly surprised I won because there are lots of very strong girls there and it's good competition. It's also fun to meet new people that have the same interests and motivation as you."



9. Golf qualifies for state, Dillon medals for third straight season

As the scores trickled

in to the clubhouse at Paola Country Club, the Louisburg golf team could hardly stand it.

The Wildcats were nervously waiting to hear if they had qualified for state, but they knew it was going to be close. Louisburg had to be in the top three of the team standings to earn a spot and the Wildcats had some tough competition amongst them.

As it turned out, the Wildcats had nothing to worry about.

Louisburg recorded a team score of 352 during the Class 4A regional tournament in May and finished third overall by nine strokes over fourth-place Ottawa. The Wildcat team of Calvin Dillon, Drake Varns, Garrett Rolofson, Ryan Haight, Noah Hill and Colin Cook all competed in the state tournament

Topeka-Hayden won the regional title going away with a 332 and Louisburg was just three strokes behind runner-up Tonganoxie, which had a 349.

“It feels great, especially with all the hard work we have put in the offseason and last few months,” Dillon said. “It was our goal coming in and we did it. I felt like we had a good chance. It was borderline with those four teams being as close as we are. I knew we had a chance, but it was nice to actually qualify. It was definitely a little nerve-racking waiting for the scores to come in.”

As impressive as that

feat was for the Wildcats, Dillon's performance blew away the rest of the competition.

The Louisburg junior won his first individual regional title as he carded a 1-over 73 to win the tournament by six strokes. Dillon's 73 was his best score on the season and he has now won all but one tournament on the year.

Dillon went on to record his third consecutive state medal and finished 11th overall in Dodge City after the tournament was postponed several times, and eventually moved due to weather.



8. Wildcat wrestling sends six to state, Moore earns first state medal

Back in early November of 2018, Austin Moore was in a sling with a broken collarbone and he wondered why all this was happening.

Moore suffered the injury during the regional football playoffs and he didn't get to finish his final high school season. Not only that, his hopes of getting his first state wrestling medal was in serious jeopardy.

A little more than four months later, Moore was on the medal stand with some of the state's best wrestlers in his weight class.

The Louisburg senior earned a fourth-place medal at 220 pounds during the Class 4A Kansas State Wrestling Championships in February at the Tony's Pizza Events Center in Salina. It was his first high school state medal and it marked the end of a long journey for Moore.

“It was pretty special for me to get a state medal, especially because it has been a goal of mine ever since I started wrestling,” Moore said. “Overall, I felt like I wrestled pretty well, but I just wish I could've ended it on a win.”

The Wildcats qualified six wrestlers for state, had three regional champions and took third place in the team standings during the regional tournament in Paola – all while not being able to field a full team.

Louisburg's talent was

certainly on full display during the two-day tournament. Brandon Doles, Blue Caplinger and Austin Moore won regional crowns, Cade Holtzen was a regional runner-up, while Gabe Bonham and Ryan Owens also qualified for state by placing third and fourth, respectively.

As a team, the Wildcats ended up with 138.5 points and was just 2.5 points out of second place. Ottawa won the regional with 149.5 points and Eudora was second at 141. It was the highest regional team finish for Louisburg since 1998.

“The way these guys wrestled this weekend shows that the program has been doing so many things right this season,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “We’ve had the obstacle of low numbers, which hurt us in our duals, but when it comes to tournament time, we have a bunch of guys who are placing high and that gives us a lot of team points. Taking six to state feels pretty encouraging, and finishing third at regionals is an awesome statement for this team.

“If a few things had gone the other way, we would have been in second as a team. On paper, we weren’t supposed to be in the race for a regional plaque. Almost all of our guys stepped up and scored huge team points for us.”



7. Louisburg softball captures regional title

OTTAWA – Madison

Svoboda could feel her heart starting to come out of her chest.

Karson Griggs was a
feeling a little nauseous.

Those are some of the
same feelings that were flooding the Louisburg softball's team
dugout during the
final inning of the Class 4A regional championship game
against Chanute on
Tuesday in Ottawa.

Louisburg held a one
run lead, but Chanute had the tying run on third, two outs,
and a trip to the
state tournament was on the line. On the mound was sophomore

Brooklyn Diederich, and with two strikes, the Chanute batter fouled five straight pitches.

The tension was mounting.

Finally, on the 10th pitch of the at-bat, Diederich got what she was looking for – a swing and miss.

The strikeout sealed the Lady Cats' trip to state with a 6-5 victory over No. 7 seed Chanute and sent shockwaves throughout Class 4A softball.

"I want to cry, but at the same time I am just really happy," Griggs said. "It is exciting because I never thought something like this could happen, especially this year. It feels really nice and now maybe people will actually start taking us seriously."

Not many gave people gave the Lady Cats a chance as they entered the Class 4A regional tournament with just five wins and were forced to begin tournament action in the play-in game.

After a 17-2 win over Parsons last Monday in the play-in game, No. 15 Louisburg advanced to the regional semifinals and upset No. 2 seed Ottawa, 9-7, which helped set up the Lady Cats' first state tournament appearance since 2014.

"I think a lot of

other teams underestimated us," Diederich said. "The fact that we came out and played our hardest ball showed what type of team we actually are. It is just crazy."

At the state tournament in Salina a week later, the Lady Cats faced off against Andale and lost to the eventual state champion in the first round, 10-0.



6. Cross Country qualifies for state, Moore breaks school record and takes third at state

BALDWIN CITY – One by one, members of the Louisburg girls cross country team crossed the finish line and coach John Reece was unsure whether or not his team did enough

to qualify for state.

The Lady Cats had made school history by qualifying the last two seasons, but the third time was a little bit in jeopardy – that was until the results were released.

As it turned out, Reece didn't need to be so worried.

Louisburg finished third overall with 96 points in October at the Class 4A regional meet at the Baldwin Golf Course, and beat out Bishop Miege by six points to earn a spot at the state meet this weekend in Wamego.

The team of Trinity Moore, Carlee Gassman, Reese Johnson, Claire Brown, Ruth Minster, Kennady Wilkerson and Bree Gassman competed for the Lady Cats at state.

“This group of girls runs well, they race well and they train well together,” coach Reece said. “They are a good group and this is just as exciting as the other two times. The competition was a lot tougher than the previous two times. We had to run our races and we did. From our third to fifth runners was about an eight point spread.”

Trinity Moore has left a lasting impression on the Louisburg cross country program over the last four years, but she saved the best moment for her final act.

Moore broke her own school record with a time of 19 minutes and 39 seconds to finish third overall at the Kansas Class 4A State Cross Country Championships at the Wamego Country Club a week later.

The Louisburg senior recorded the program's best ever state finish as she eclipsed her fourth-place state medal from a season ago.

"It meant so much to me to finish with such a great race for my high school career," Moore said.

"Going into the race, I didn't know how well I would finish. This race had the best competition that I have ran against all year and I think that is what really pushed me.

"When I saw my time crossing the finish line, I was ecstatic. I felt great the entire race and was able to control everything I did. Finishing third was icing on the cake. I was surprised but so incredibly happy to be able to place in such a great spot, but I also knew that this was what I had worked for all year."

This made the fourth state medal for Moore in her high school career and she improved on her state finish every year. Last season, she took fourth overall and bested her state time from a year ago by more than 30 seconds.



5. Boys Soccer wins league, regional titles to earn No. 1 seed in playoffs.

For more than 70 minutes, the goals for Louisburg were hard to come by and it started to leave an eerie feeling on Halloween night.

However, the Wildcats got their treat when it was all over.

Louisburg scored two goals in the final seven minutes of the match to earn a 2-0 victory over Kansas City Christian in the Class 4-1A regional championship game Thursday. The Wildcats (16-2-1) earned their third regional title in the last four years and advanced to the state quarterfinals.

“This group is special,” Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. “It is going to be tough when it is

all over. This group has changed our culture. They came back to what this program believes and they have bought in to what we are teaching them. They have worked so hard since June. For these seniors, this is their third title in four years and I think it is a lot of fun for them.

A school record 16 wins, a Frontier League championship and a regional title are all something worth celebrating, but following the state quarterfinal match with Bishop Miege, all Louisburg could think about was the finality of it all.

Despite all those accomplishments, the Wildcats fell one win short of their main goal – a spot in the state final four.

Louisburg saw its season come to a close with a 3-0 loss to Bishop Miege at the Wildcat Sports Complex. The Wildcats lost to the eventual state champion, as Miege went on to defeat Wichita-Trinity on Saturday, 3-1, for the Class 4-1A state championship – the Stags' fourth in a row.

As difficult as the loss was for Louisburg, there was no forgetting how big of a jump the Wildcats made from the season before as they went from a 6-win team to one that earned the East's No. 1 seed in the state playoffs.

“Going 6-11 last year and seeing this Miege team almost mercy-ruling us in the regional championship last year in the rain, was a program changer,” Louisburg coach

Kyle Conley said. "After that was over, we talked about how things needed to change and it starts now. For our first practice in June, I told them that they are the ones that has to change them. Since day one, they have played for each other, played hard in practice and it was a total mindset change. When someone got hurt, it was the next guy up. We missed two starters for half of the year and it was always the next guy up taking advantage of his opportunity to fill in. The freshmen stepped up huge for us.

"This team is special. 16 wins is a school record and only two losses is probably a school record. This team is incredible, played so hard and did everything I asked them to do. They were always there to pick each other up and that is what this soccer family is all about. It will be tough to say goodbye to these kids."



4. Volleyball knocks off Miege to win regional title, takes fourth at state

ATCHISON – The sub-state semifinal game between Louisburg and Bishop Miege had all the feels of a state tournament match.

Partially because a year ago, it was.

Louisburg met Miege in the state championship match only to see the Stags send the Lady Cats to a runner-up finish in two sets. Then three weeks ago the two teams met again, and like before, Miege dispatched of Louisburg in two sets.

However, Bishop Miege saw a different Louisburg team during the sub-state tournament at Atchison High

School – one they didn't expect.

The Lady Cats came out on fire and never let up in a 25-18 and 25-22 win over Miege to end the Stags' season. It marks the first time in at least 12 years, if not longer, that Miege will not be at the state tournament.

Since the state

tournament began in 1971, Bishop Miege has made 39 state appearances during that time in either Class 5A or 4A and is the most in Kansas history.

“Our energy was going

to be the difference in that match, so we knew we had to bring it,” Louisburg

senior Erin Lemke said. “We knew we had the same skill set as Miege, but our

energy was what was going to pull us through there in the end.

To get there, we

just had to believe in ourselves and work hard this past week to give us the

confidence that we needed.”

However, even after

pulling off a big revenge win that expended a lot of energy, the Lady Cats

still had a sub-state championship match to play against No. 2 seed Atchison.

The No. 7 seed Lady Cats took care of business as they won in straight sets,

25-12 and 25-15, at Atchison High School.

Louisburg lost its final two matches of the season, but those setbacks didn't take away from what the Lady Cats accomplished during the Kansas Class 4A State Championships.

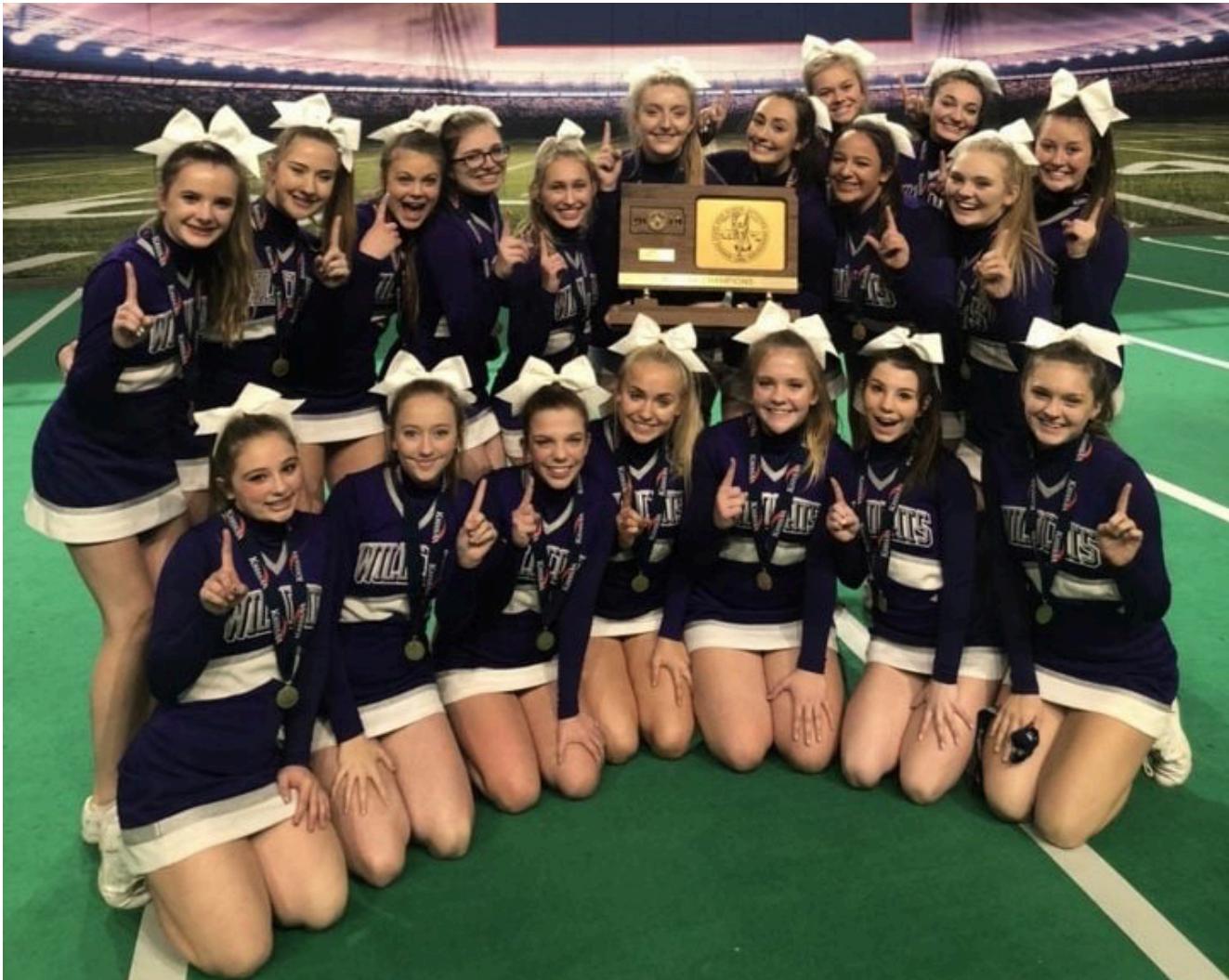
For the third straight

season, the Lady Cats were among the last four teams playing

and brought home a little hardware for their efforts. Louisburg took fourth overall after losing its third place match to Towanda-Circle, 2-1, in October at Hutchinson Sports Arena.

“Every season our goal is to put ourselves in the best position to qualify for state and then to hopefully advance to bracket play on Saturday,” Louisburg coach Jessica Compliment said. “Leading up to state, we talked about how nothing is guaranteed and in order to make it to bracket play, we have to show up and play our best from the first whistle to the last whistle. If we play our game, then hopefully the winning will take care of itself and we’d advance.

“The eight teams at state this year were all very talented. I was happy that we qualified for the semifinals because that put us one step closer to the championship. Even though we didn’t reach the championship match and finished fourth, I was still very proud of how the team played throughout the tournament.”



3. Louisburg cheer wins first state championship

The Wildcat

cheerleaders competed at the Class 4A KSHSAA Game Day Spirit Showcase

Competition on Nov. 23 at the Stormont Vail Events Center in Topeka and came back home with a big trophy in tow.

Louisburg edged out runner-up Augusta with a point total of 82.25 to 81 in the finals to secure what is just the third athletic team state title in school history.

“I was so nervous at the awards,” Louisburg senior Lauren Vincent said. “We were all holding hands and had our heads down. We thought that we would get second

place at best, most likely third. We were content because we put everything out on the mat and did the best we could. But when they called out second place and it was Augusta, we screamed, cried, and hugged each other because we knew that we had just won.

“When our name was called for first, we jumped up and hugged each other. Then I ran out onto the mat and grabbed the trophy and we held it up and jumped around victoriously. It was the best feeling in the entire world. Knowing that all of our hard work had finally paid off was indescribable feeling of joy.”

The Louisburg cheerleaders that competed are Lexi Pena, Lauren Vincent, Ashlyn McManigal, Brooklyn Mitchell, Gabby Tappan, Andrea Gaza, Eleanor Willming, Jayden Trester, Lacie Kallevig, Sammy McDaniel, Mable Graham, Anna Morrison, Bella Feikert, Audrey Anderson, Sydney Dudzik, Kaitlyn Vest, Jolie Hendrickson, Abby Bradley and Zoe Cutshaw. Louisburg’s head coach is Jayna Guerra.

Not only were the Wildcats the third team to win a state title in school history, they were also the first female squad to win a team crown as well. All the history just added to what was a special day for the program.

“It means so much to me and all my teammates,” Tappan said. “As someone who’s been a part of a variety

of sports my entire life, I know how hard each of our teams work to do their very best in whatever sport they're a part of. We are so thankful that we got to make history for Louisburg and it is something that I can guarantee that each and every one of us will remember it for the rest of our lives."



2. Girls soccer takes second at state, Conley named coach of year and Scholtz, Buffington awarded players of year.

When it was all said and done, the Louisburg girls soccer team held its trophy high in front of the Wildcat faithful and the tears were easy to spot.

After nearly 200 minutes of soccer in a nine-hour time period, including one

match that ended in penalty kicks, the Wildcats were spent. They gave everything they had.

For the second consecutive season, Louisburg earned the Class 4-3-2-1A state runner-up trophy after a wild victory over Topeka-Hayden in the semifinals and then were shutout by Bishop Miege in the championship game, 4-0. It was the third consecutive state final four appearance for Louisburg.

Frustration and sadness was easy to see following the Wildcats' loss to the defending state champion, but the team realizes what they have accomplished in just four years of existence is to be celebrated.

"Being in this situation two years in a row is something that doesn't happen very often,"

Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "There are a bunch of teams that haven't been to a state final four and we have been to three in three years. It is pretty cool and it is special."

It was a wild 24 hours for the Wildcats. Louisburg was supposed to play Hayden on Friday in the semifinals, but severe weather forced the postponement to early Saturday morning.

The Wildcats battled Hayden through four overtimes and eventually led to penalty kicks. After an intense first five penalty kicks that left the match still tied, senior goalie

Carson Buffington recorded a big save and then senior Hallie Hutsell converted the sixth penalty kick to break the tie and give Louisburg a 2-1 win over Hayden.

“We usually play 80 minutes, but this time we had to play 110 minutes and we were gassed,” Conley said. “We were holding on and had some chances at the end to win it, but then we went to overtime and then to penalty kicks. It was all about to see if we could survive. Emotionally it was just a high for us and an unbelievable response and a great finish. Carson making a big save, Hallie putting it in for the win – it was just a great game.”

In the championship match, the Stags were just too much for the Wildcats and junior Sophia Stram provided a big spark. Stram scored all four goals for Miege in the title game, all of which came in the first half, and the Wildcats didn’t have an answer.

“They are just so freaking good,” Conley said. “I think the girls were mentally ready, but I don’t think their legs were quite ready, but we lost to one of best teams in the state of Kansas. They have great players, they are well-coached, but our girls played their butts off.

Coming off its second consecutive state runner-up appearance, Louisburg had some positive repercussions from its historic season.

However, none bigger came when the all-state teams were released by the Kansas Soccer Coaches Association. Not only did six Wildcats earn all-state selections, but they were honored with some of the highest awards out there.

Junior Mackenzie Scholtz was named as the Co-Offensive Player of the Year in Class 4-1A with Bishop Miege's Sophia Stram after she led the Wildcats in scoring.

Louisburg was also recognized on the other side of the ball as senior Carson Buffington was named the Class 4-1A Goalkeeper of the Year.

"Seeing Mackenzie and Carson recognized for their positional player of the years was fantastic," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "They both had incredible years."

The Wildcats weren't done, as for the second consecutive season, Conley was named as the Class 4-1A Coach of the Year as he guided Louisburg to a 17-4 record. He also led the Wildcats to three consecutive final four appearances.



1.4x400 boys wins state championship, Wright wins four state medals and team breaks six school records at regional meet.

Three days after arriving in Wichita for the Kansas State Track and Field Championships, Justin Collins, Blue Caplinger, Ben Wiedenmann and Chris Williams finally got the chance to get on the Cessna Stadium track.

The four Wildcat runners had the top time in Class 4A going into the 4x400-meter relay, but weather threw a little wrench into their plans. The meet, which was supposed to end on a Saturday, was postponed to Sunday morning and all

races were judged by times with no preliminaries.

It wasn't the ideal situation, but they made it work – and it worked well.

Collins, Caplinger, Wiedenmann and Williams won the state championship in a time of 3 minutes and 25.39 seconds as they edged Chapman at the finish line, which ran a 3:25.61. It was the first state track championship for Louisburg since 2015 when Connor McMullen won the discus.

That was just one event in what was an historic week for Louisburg track.

Louisburg freshman Delaney Wright earned four state medals, while junior teammate Carlee Gassman finished with three as the Lady Cats went on to finish 10th in the team standings. The Lady Cats earned several other medals at the state meet coming off an impressive performance at regionals.

During the Class 4A regional meet at Paola High School, Wright qualified for state in four events, broke two school records and earned a regional title in her first postseason track meet.



Wright won a regional title in the long jump and finished second in the 200 and 400-meter dashes. She also helped Carlee Gassman, Rain Pugh and Sydni Keagle to a second place finish in the 4x400-meter relay.

"I am so grateful for everything," Wright said. "I had been having trouble with my hip this week and I just wanted to come out and make state in at least one event. I didn't realize I would make it in four. It is an unbelievable feeling."

Wright's day was just one of the many positives for the Lady Cats as they broke four school records, had four regional

champions and qualified for state in 10 events.

As a team, the Lady Cats nearly earned the regional runner-up trophy as they racked up 86.5 points and finished a half a point behind second place Baldwin and Bishop Miege, who tied for second. Paola won the regional title with 107 points.

The Wildcat boys also broke two school records and would end up qualifying for nine spots at the state meet.

Wildcats find individual success in Tonganoxie



Louisburg sophomore Brandon Doles works for some back points against Frontenac's Storm Niegisch on Saturday in Tongnaoxie. Doles upset Niegisch, the state's No. 5-ranked wrestler, in a 5-3 decision.

TONGANOXIE – The Louisburg wrestling team had one final meet before the end of 2019, and before it even started, the Wildcats were faced with several challenges.

Maybe the biggest was the fact the Wildcats had three open weight classes during the Randy Starcher Memorial Dual Tournament. That means, in some cases, the Wildcats would have to give up 18 points in every dual.

That was one of the reasons the Wildcats finished the Dec. 21 tournament with an 0-5 record at Tonganoxie High School.

Louisburg opened with a 57-21 loss to eventual champion Shawnee Heights. The Wildcats also came up short to Coffeyville-Field Kindley (48-28), Frontenac (48-33), Eudora (45-29) and Independence (45-24).

As tough as the team results were, the Wildcats still had several individuals who fared well in their final competition of the year.

Junior Ryan Owens (120 pounds) and Cade Holtzen (132) were each perfect with a 5-0 record on the day.

Owens picked up a big victory in his first match of the tournament as he pinned Shawnee Heights' Decker Stickelman, the No. 6-ranked wrestler in Class 5A, in just 28 seconds. Owens later went on to record two more pins and had another victory by major decision.

Holtzen also had a strong performance as he finished the day with three pins, but also recorded two close decisions. Holtzen outlasted Eudora's Will Schreiner by a 3-1 decision and then held on for a 2-1 victory over Independence's Zak Al-Bureni.



Sophomore A.J. Reed lifts his opponent and brings him to the mat Saturday in Tonganoxie.

Freshman Kaven Bartlett (113) and junior Ben Wiedenmann (170) each left Tonganoxie with only one loss.

Wiedenmann, who wrestled through a knee injury, recorded two pins and also won by technical fall and major decision. As for Bartlett, he finished with two pins and a 20-7 major decision.

Sophomore Brandon Doles (160) finished his day with a 3-2 record, but one of those wins were

a big one. Doles upset Frontenac's Storm Niegisch, who is ranked No. 5 in Class 4A, in a 5-3 decision. He also recorded a pair of major decisions.

Sophomore A.J. Reed (182) had a 2-3 record, while Jarrett Hoyle (138), Johnathan Keegan-Childs (195) and Cole Ewalt (220, 285) each had one win.

Louisburg will take a break from the dual competitions and will host the Louisburg Wildcat Classic on Jan. 11 in its first action back from the holiday break.

Wildcats fall to Olathe West

On Dec. 18, the Louisburg wrestling team traveled for a quick dual with Olathe West and the Wildcats left with a 54-29 loss to the Owls.

Ryan Owens (120 pounds), Cade Holtzen (132) and Xander Chennault (170) each won by pin, while Brandon Doles (160) picked up a victory by technical fall. Kaven Bartlett (113) won by forfeit.

Wildcats find positives after winless December Duals



Louisburg senior Harrison Laney works for a pin at 138 pounds Thursday during the Louisburg December Duals Tournament. Laney finished with two wins on the night.

The schedule ramped up for the Louisburg wrestling team last week as the Wildcats squared off with five teams during the Louisburg December Duals Tournament on Thursday.

The Wildcats faced off with several difficult squads and saw their day come to an end with an 0-5 record. Louisburg had to overcome obstacles before the tournament even started as junior captain Ben Wiedenmann was a late scratch at 170 pounds due to injury, and the Wildcats had to give up points at that spot.

Still, there were a few positives for the Wildcats to build on from their home opener.

"Although we went 0-5, the duals were pretty close," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "Three of them came down to one match. Ben was out with an injured knee, and that was a last minute decision and we didn't have a backup ready to go. With a healthy Ben in the lineup or a chance to plan ahead, we might have been able to do things a little differently team-wise, but it is what it is. The wrestlers stepped out there and competed tough. It was a long night and I'm proud of how they battled."

Louisburg opened the tournament with a close loss to Prairie View (42-32), fell to Burlington (47-33) and then lost a close

match to Baldwin (42-36). The Wildcats lost to the tournament champion, Basehor-Linwood (54-25), and then to end the night they came up short to Independence (42-39).

Juniors Ryan Owens and Cade Holtzen provided with the Wildcats with a pair of perfect performances. Owens, who wrestles at 120 pounds, recorded three pins on the night to go along with a technical fall and a major decision.

Holtzen had a big night at 132 pounds as he also finished with a 5-0 record. He recorded two pins and won the other three by decision, including a close 2-1 decision to Independence's Zak Al-Bureni to end the night.



Senior Sam Kratochvil gets a pin over a Baldwin wrestler Thursday during the Wildcats' home opener.

Freshman Kaven Bartlett had just one loss at 113 pounds, including a pin of Burlington's Owen McManus and a 12-5 decision over Baldwin's Nakos Benton.

Sophomore Brandon Doles and Aiden Barker also had a winning record. Doles went 3-2 at 160 pounds and won by pin, a technical fall and a major decision. Barker was 3-2 at 182 pounds with two pins.

Harrison Laney (138 pounds), Xander Chennault (152), A.J. Reed (195) and Sam Kratochvil (220) each ended the night with two victories. Luke Kelly (126), A.J. Drew (145) and Elijah Eslinger (285) each

recorded a win for Louisburg.

The Wildcats will try and bounce back tonight when they travel to Olathe West for a dual. Matches are set to begin at 6 p.m.

Louisburg will then travel to Tonganoxie Saturday for another dual tournament.

Wildcats take first at Fort Scott to open season



Louisburg junior Ben Wiedenmann recorded a 5-0 record to go along with two pins Friday during the Fort Scott Dual Tournament. The Wildcats finished first overall with a 4-1 record.

FORT SCOTT – The Louisburg wrestling team put together an impressive showing in its season opener Friday at the Fort Scott Dual Tournament.

All the Wildcats did was leave Fort Scott with a 4-1 record and a first-place trophy for their efforts as they kicked their season off in high gear. They finished in a tie for first with Fort Scott, but Louisburg won the tiebreaker based on head-to-

head criteria.

Louisburg had just one open spot the entire tournament and the Wildcats even brought reserves to wrestle unattached, which would pay off later in the evening.

“One of the best things about Friday night was that we not only took a nearly full squad, but even when an injury happened, we were able to have a back-up there to fill in,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “We’re starting to get our program back up with numbers after last season’s hiccup. With more bodies in the practice room, we’re able to embrace the ‘iron sharpens iron’ mentality.”

As it turned out, the Wildcats’ second dual of the night against Fort Scott turned out to be their biggest one. Louisburg edged Fort Scott for a 40-37 victory after opening the tournament with a 39-27 win over Blue Valley Southwest.

Freshman Kaven Bartlett (113 pounds) opened with a pin and junior Ryan Owens (120) followed with a 14-5 major decision. Sophomore Brandon Doles (160), junior Ben Wiedenmann (170) and sophomore Aiden Barker (182) each had pins to score key points for the Wildcats.

The biggest victory for Louisburg came at 220 pounds when senior

Sam Kratochvil

earned a first period pin to secure the win over Fort Scott.

To

end the night, the Wildcats also secured a 42-33 win over Anderson County in another close victory. Owens, Doles and Wiedenmann earned pins for Louisburg, but it was another senior that stepped up again for the Wildcats.



Sophomore Aiden Barker works for a pin at 182 pounds Friday in Fort Scott.

With

sophomore A.J. Reed out with an injury, senior Hugh Staver filled in at 195 pounds and earned a first period pin to seal the win for the

Wildcats.

"We

had two guys really step up big for us in two of the duals," Bovaird said. "Against

Fort Scott, Sam Kratochvil got a huge pin for us at 220, and against Anderson

County, Hugh Staver won big by pinning his opponent at 195. AJ Reed had been

wrestling varsity at 195, but he hurt his ribs against Glendale-Springfield.

Hugh was there to fill in and he followed through with a big win. Our guys are

gaining confidence every match, and that's what I like to see.

"Xander

Chennault had a great match against Fort Scott. He hasn't wrestled since

freshman year, but he worked hard to make 152 and when he wrestled the Fort

Scott kid, who's a pretty talented wrestler, he not only got the first

takedown, but he locked up a cradle and nearly pinned him!

Kaven Bartlett has also

been doing great as a freshman at 113. His one loss was a 1-0 decision against

a junior from Anderson County."

The

four team captains, junior Cade Holtzen (132), Owens, Doles and Wiedenmann, had

just one loss between them as all four scored crucial points for the Wildcats

throughout the night.

Owens was 5-0 with three pins and a major decision, while Doles had five wins and three pins and Wiedenmann was 5-0 with two pins. Holtzen was 4-1 with a pair of pins, and his lone

loss was a 3-1 decision to Fort Scott's Coby Burchett.

Barker also had a successful day at 182 pounds as he finished with a 4-1 record and two pins.

"All

four of them really stepped up and competed well," Bovaird said. "They had a

combined record of 19-1 on the evening. Ryan looked dominant in his matches,

and Ben looked like he was a lot closer to wrestling shape than he realized.

It's great to see both of them wrestling at their true weights this season,

rather than having to bump up.

"Brandon

is doing well at his higher weight class, and I'm pretty happy with how he's

adapted to that move. Cade also looked pretty solid. His lone loss was to the

returning state runner-up, and I liked how he competed. That's a winnable match

next time we see them."

Louisburg

also defeated an unattached team 51-24, while their only loss came in a 52-30

setback to Glendale-Springfield, out of Missouri.

The

Wildcats will kick off their home season Thursday when they host the December

Duals. Burlington, Prairie View, Basehor-Linwood, Independence and Baldwin will

all compete in the dual tournament. The first match is set for 4 p.m.